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Rob Baril, President  
District 1199NE

Before the Human Services Committee

***In Support of HB 6616: AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE TO IMMIGRATION STATUS***

Good Afternoon Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, and members of the Committee. My name is Rob Baril and I am the President of District 1199 New England. Our union represents approximately 26,000 workers across Connecticut who deliver care in public and private healthcare settings. Of those members, we represent private sector Nursing Home workers of all kinds, home care workers, and group home workers in the long term care industry. Our members also provide safety net healthcare services through state agencies like the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services as public employees. They are working-class black, brown and white workers who continue to provide care with love, but many times are treated as expendable workers. Many of our District 1199 members are immigrants, and many of the folks they care for are also immigrants. That fact strengthens our commitment to equity. Our union is also a member of Recovery For All - a statewide coalition of faith, community and labor organizations that is fighting for the passage of our Equity Agenda - a package of investment priorities and revenue raising policies that invest in our residents. House Bill 6616 represents one of those investment priorities and so I am here today to testify in support of this bill.

Before I justify this bill with any statistics and facts, I just want to get to the basic premise of this bill: That in order for Connecticut to truly be a state that prioritizes equity, this bill should pass. Health care is a human right. We all deserve health care, no matter what we look like and no matter how much money we make. If we can identify racism as a public health crisis - like we did in 2021- then we as a state should be able to understand that everybody deserves healthcare and that denying access to affordable healthcare is inhumane, and more importantly, it is bad public health policy. Lack of health coverage prevents treatment of curable diseases leading to sickness and in the worst cases, premature death, as we saw during the pandemic.

As a state, we have made significant progress in the last few years. In 2021, we were able to provide undocumented pregnant people with access to prenatal care through HUSKY and starting April 1, 2023, undocumented pregnant people will have access to one year of postpartum care through HUSKY. As of January 1, 2023, undocumented immigrant children ages 0 to 12 will have access to HUSKY coverage (Medicaid and CHIP). Even despite this progress, we still have work to do. Many are still left behind - For example, 58% of the roughly 113,000 undocumented immigrants in CT do not have

any form of health insurance coverage and undocumented immigrants over 12 years old are still excluded from Medicaid and CHIP programs (HUSKY in CT), Medicare, Access Health CT state exchange coverage and financial help, and private insurance coverage.

This proposal is widely supported by CT voters - 57% of CT Voters' Support Husky For All Immigrants - and in particular, Black (83%) and Latinx (76%) voters in particular are overwhelmingly supportive. There is even more robust support for allowing all children to receive insurance through HUSKY -- two thirds of voters (66%), including 92% of Democrats, a majority of independents (58%), 89% of Black voters and 82% of Latinx voters and nearly three quarters of younger voters (72%) are in favor of this proposal.

This proposal is a positive thing for our State, and it will show that Connecticut is committed to equity. Please pass this bill. Thank you for your time.